



Delta Regional Authority Request for Proposals

**For the Development of the Delta Regional Development Plan III (RDP III)
DRA's Strategic Plan 2015-2020**

Section 1: Overview, Purpose, and Framework for the Delta Regional Development Plan III (RDP III)

1.1 Introduction

The Delta Regional Authority (DRA) is soliciting competitive responses to this Request for Proposals (RFP) in order to enter into a contract with an economic development entity to collaboratively develop the next phase of the DRA's strategic plan, herein referred to as the Delta Regional Development Plan III (RDP III).

The RDP III will become the DRA's new strategic plan, which will build and expand upon the DRA's previous strategic plan which has guided the DRA's priorities since 2008, herein referred to as the Delta Regional Development Plan II (RDP II). Through this process, the RDP III will ensure that the fundamental guiding principles of the RDP II are maintained, while also expanding and developing these guiding principles into targeted policy recommendations and actionable plans, ensuring the continued relevance and implementation of the DRA's overarching development strategy. These three fundamental guiding principles or "foundational goals" are below (refer to section two for additional explanation of these goals):

Goal 1 – Advance the productivity and economic competitiveness of the Delta workforce

Goal 2 – Strengthen the Delta's physical and digital connections to the global economy

Goal 3 – Facilitate capacity building within Delta communities

The RDP III will also integrate DRA's collaborative work with its various partners, including local and regional stakeholders, community organizations, non-profit and philanthropic organizations, and federal agencies. The RDP III will ultimately become the DRA's updated five-year comprehensive strategic plan and will set actionable guidelines, priorities, strategies, and

benchmarks for the DRA as it continues its work to bolster the economic development of the Delta region of the United States.

1.2 Request for Proposals

The Delta Regional Authority is soliciting competitive responses to this RFP in order to best serve the needs and interests of the DRA, the Delta region, and its stakeholders.

This process will be overseen by the DRA in partnership with Ted Abernathy, Managing Partner of Economic Leadership LLC, who will serve as the Project Director on behalf of the DRA and will help manage the completion of the RDP III.

A total amount up to \$150,000 will be provided to the selected contractor in exchange for the development and completion of the RDP III.

All applicants who submit proposals in response to this RFP will herein be described as “respondents”. The awardee of the project once selected by the DRA will herein be described as “the contractor”.

Respondents’ proposals must be received by the DRA no later than 11:59 p.m. eastern daylight time on April 24, 2015 via mail (refer to section 4.2 for instructions).

The contractor selected by the DRA will be notified by May 1, 2015. The contractor must complete the finished RDP III document by September 30, 2015 (refer to section 1.4 for timeline and benchmarks).

1.3 Eligibility

Respondents must be professionals or entities with demonstrated expertise in economic development.

DRA is soliciting competitive proposals because it has determined that this process best serves the needs and interest of the DRA and the public. No institution or person shall be discriminated against on the grounds of race, color, citizenship status, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, age, weight, religion, creed, physical or mental disability, marital status, veteran status, political affiliation, or any other factor protected by law in consideration for an award issued pursuant to this RFP. DRA is committed to the principles of equal opportunity and the elimination of all vestiges of discriminatory practices that might exist.

1.4 Timeline

The timeline below is divided into two sections (phase one and phase two):

Phase One – Proposal Timeline:

- April 1 – RFP will be published on www.fbo.gov and www.dra.gov/rdp3

- April 7 – Webinar will be held by the DRA to review the RFP and application process, and answer any questions. Tentative time for the webinar will be 2:00pm eastern daylight time. Final details are forthcoming. Please refer to www.dra.gov/rdp3 for further information.
- April 20 – Deadline for respondents to formally submit clarification questions
- April 21 – DRA will publish all questions and the corresponding answers on www.dra.gov/rdp3
- April 24 – Deadline for proposals to be submitted at 11:59 p.m. eastern daylight time.

Phase Two – RDP III Development Timeline:

- May 1 – Contractor will be selected by the DRA, and the DRA Executive Committee will be updated on the process
- May 8 – DRA and contractor will meet to finalize scope of work and execute the agreement
- May 18 or May 26 – (On or about these tentative dates) – Region-wide kickoff event held in the Delta region with a listening session format. Event and coordination will be managed by the contractor and DRA Project Director, with DRA input, guidance, and staff support
- May 29 – Progress review meeting between DRA and contractor
- June 1 to July 23 – Within this time frame, contractor will hold eight listening session events, one in each state. Events will be held and coordinated by DRA Project Director and the contractor, with DRA input and guidance
- June 26 – Second progress review meeting between DRA and contractor
- July 10 – DRA Executive Committee Conference Call will include an update on RDP III
- July 24 – Third progress review between DRA and contractor and report to full DRA board
- August 1 – DRA Executive Committee will receive preliminary final draft of RDP III
- August 20 – Special budget conference call will be held with DRA board to review 2017 draft budget, and consultant will give presentation on RDP III
- September 21 – Contractor presents final version of RDP III document to DRA leadership
- September 24 – RDP III final document is distributed to the DRA board
- September 30 – RDP III final version officially goes into effect, is released publically and made available on www.dra.gov

1.5 General Guidelines for Proposals

All proposals must be received by mail by April 24, 2015 at 11:59 p.m. eastern daylight time. Proposals should adhere to the following guidelines:

A successful proposal:

- Will be 36 pages or fewer in length.
- Will be submitted by a professional or entity recognized to have expertise in the economic development field.

- Will include a detailed outline and plan of action and will incorporate factors as directed in section 2 (content and process guidelines for proposals) and will include a response to all items listed in section 3 (technical proposal guidelines).
- Will demonstrate a strong working knowledge of, and will creatively build and expand upon, RDP II.
- Will demonstrate the applicant's expertise in economic development approaches and best practices.

Section 2: Technical Approach to Scope of Work Guidelines on Content and Process for a Successful Proposal

The RDP III will build upon the RDP II, which lays out three important foundational goals (as shown below in Diagram I). These three goals have proven to be successful guiding principles for DRA’s work and for the economic development of the Delta region.

2.1 The Three RDP Goal Categories

2.1 A. The Three RDP II Goal Categories

Goal 1 – Advance the productivity and economic competitiveness of the Delta workforce

Goal 2 – Strengthen the Delta’s physical and digital connections to the global economy

Goal 3 – Create critical mass within Delta communities

2.1 B. The Three RDP III Goal Categories: Similar to RDP II

The RDP III will revise and expand upon the foundational goals laid out in RDP II as follows:

- RDP II goal one will remain the same, and the RDP III will build upon it.
- RDP II goal two will remain the same, and the RDP III will build upon it.
- RDP II goal three will be transitioned to fulfill the following action in RDP III: “Facilitate capacity building within Delta communities”.

Goal 1 – Advance the productivity and economic competitiveness of the Delta workforce

Goal 2 – Strengthen the Delta’s physical and digital connections to the global economy

Goal 3 – Facilitate capacity building within Delta communities

Section 3: Technical Proposal

3.1 Requirements for Technical Proposal

The technical proposal must present a complete and detailed scope of work, herein described as a “technical proposal,” which presents the respondent’s qualifications to perform and carry out the requirements set forth in this RFP. The technical proposal must include the following required sections and must not exceed 36 type written pages:

- Transmittal letter
- Table of contents
- Executive summary
- Respondent’s background
- Corporation’s background
- Letters of recommendation
- Respondent’s experience and qualifications
- Project organization, staffing, and supervision
- Technical approach to scope of work
- Work plan, timeline and budget

The respondent shall clearly mark each section in accordance with the bullet points listed above.

Each DRA evaluator will review each respondent’s entire technical proposal. Therefore, the respondent shall refrain from duplication and repetition of information in various sections of their proposals.

The following sections identify particular items that each respondent shall include under each heading/section in their technical proposal. Respondents shall use the font and size Times New Roman 12-point throughout their proposals.

3.2 Transmittal Letter

The transmittal letter must be signed by an individual authorized to legally bind the respondent. Please note – these are ALL THRESHOLD items and failure to comply will cause immediate disqualification, so this letter must include:

- A statement indicating that the respondent is a corporation or other legal entity, including tax identification number on IRS Form W-9;
- A statement that the respondent does not discriminate in its employment practices on the grounds of race, color, citizenship status, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, age, weight, religion, creed, physical or mental disability, marital status, veteran status, political affiliation, or any other factor protected by law;

- A statement that no attempt has been made or will be made by the respondent to persuade any other person or firm to submit or not to submit a bid;
- A statement that the respondent has read, understands and agrees to all provisions of this RFP without qualification;
- A statement identifying that all amendments to this RFP issued by the DRA have been received by the respondent. If no amendments have been received, a statement that the proposal will meet the requirements set forth in the RFP.

If the proposal deviates from the detailed requirements of this RFP, the transmittal letter must identify and explain these deviations. The DRA reserves the right to reject any proposal containing such deviations or to require modifications before acceptance.

3.3 Table of Contents

The respondent shall include a table of contents for the technical proposal. This table shall contain section headings and subheadings along with corresponding page numbers.

3.4 Executive Summary

The executive summary shall condense and summarize the contents of the technical proposal to provide the proposal evaluators with a broad and clear understanding of the entire proposal.

3.5 Respondent's Background

This section of the proposal shall contain information regarding the respondent's corporate background including size and resources, financial standing, involvement in litigation, and references. Also, please include highlights enumerating experience with projects similar to the ones presented in this RFP.

3.6 Corporation's Background

The respondent shall provide background information on the respondent's organization, including the following items:

- Date established,
- Ownership (whether public, partnership, subsidiary, or specified other),
- Total number of employees, and
- Number of full-time-equivalent (FTE) employees engaged in similar contracts.

3.7 Letters of Recommendation and References

Each respondent shall submit a list of three recent professional references (within the last three years) and three letters of recommendation.

Recommendations will be verified, so it is important that the proposal contain current telephone numbers, mailing addresses, and e-mail addresses for all references.

3.8 Respondent's Experience and Qualifications

In this section, the respondent shall include the following information:

- a. Evidence of the respondent's qualifications and credentials in terms of proven successful experience in multi-state strategic planning,
- b. Evidence of the respondent's qualifications and credentials in terms of proven successful experience in ensuring that "local voices are heard" in planning processes. Also, respondent's experience in developing materials to be used in such public outreach and solicitation of public input should be included.
- c. Evidence of the qualifications and credentials of the respondent in terms of proven successful experience in forming sub-regional strategic coalitions and/or performing strategic planning processes,
- d. Evidence of the qualifications and credentials of the respondent in terms of proven successful experience in performing regional, state-level and sub-regional research and analysis, particularly in the context of assembling disaggregated data into larger and more-usable groupings.

For each referenced project or contract, the respondent shall provide a description of the work performed, the time period of the project or contract, the contract amount, and a customer reference (including current contact information).

3.9 Project Organization, Staffing, and Supervision

The respondent shall include a section in its proposal that details the proposed project organization and staffing. This shall include all proposed personnel by job title and level of supervision.

Respondents shall also identify by name the person they propose for project supervisor (the project supervisor will work on behalf of the contractor in close collaboration with Ted Abernathy, the Project Director working on behalf of the DRA). The project supervisor shall not be changed without prior written approval of the DRA. The respondent shall include a resume or biographical information for the project supervisor, which details how the person is qualified for the position.

The respondent shall provide details of its intended project management and project control methods. These shall clearly explain how the respondent proposes to work in collaboration with the DRA Project Director to help manage the project, control project activities, report progress, ensure required staffing, relate and report to the DRA, respond to requests by the DRA and interact and coordinate with other relevant activities.

3.10 Technical Approach to Scope of Work

In this section the respondent shall clearly describe its approach to the scope of work described throughout this RFP, and especially in section two of this RFP. The focus of the technical approach to the scope of work shall be on future plans for the development and completion of the RDP III, not on previous experience.

3.11 Work Plan, Timeline and Budget

The respondent shall submit an overall calendar-based work plan that summarizes the work and timeline. The respondent shall also create a budget for the entire project including any due dates, reports, milestones, etc.

The work plan shall illustrate how the respondent plans the activities surrounding the execution of all phases of the development and completion of the RDP III.

Section 4: Procurement, Terms and Conditions

Proposals will be thoroughly evaluated and the contract award shall be made to the responsible respondent whose proposal is determined to be the most advantageous to the DRA. The DRA reserves the right to reject any and all proposals. The DRA reserves the right to award the contract to the respondent best suited to fulfill the contract deliverables. Lowest price will not be a consideration for awarding the contract. The DRA reserves the right to decline to award a contract from this RFP.

4.1 Written Questions

Prospective respondents will have the opportunity to submit written questions via email to clarify any uncertainties that may exist. All questions must be submitted via email to rdp3@dra.gov. Questions must be received by the DRA no later than 4:00 p.m. eastern daylight time on April 20, 2015. All questions shall be marked “DRA Regional Development Plan III” in the email subject line.

No questions will be accepted via telephone. In order to provide equal treatment of respondents, all questions regarding this RFP shall be submitted and answered in writing via email. Questions submitted must make reference to page, section, paragraph, and line number if possible. Clearly state the question as it pertains to referenced materials. All questions and corresponding answers will be posted on www.dra.gov/rdp3 by April 21, 2015.

4.2 Submission of Proposals

The technical proposal shall include a transmittal letter and plans for the delivery of the services required in this RFP. This proposal should be signed by a person legally authorized to bind the respondent.

Seven (7) separate copies of the proposal must be received under sealed cover. The outside cover of the package containing the proposals shall be marked and mailed as follows:

**Attention: Delta Regional Authority
Delta Regional Development Plan III – RFP
236 Sharkey Avenue, Suite 400
Clarksdale, MS 38614**

Additionally, one electronic copy of the proposal should be emailed to rdp3@dra.gov.

ALL PROPOSALS MUST BE RECEIVED BY MAIL NO LATER THAN 11:59 P.M. EASTERN DAYLIGHT TIME ON April 24, 2015. ANY PROPOSAL RECEIVED AFTER THIS DATE AND TIME WILL BE REJECTED.

4.3 Rules of Procurement

To facilitate the procurement of this contract, various rules have been established. They are described in the following paragraphs.

4.4 Incorporation into Contract

Appropriate portions of the successful proposal may be incorporated into the contract and will be a matter of public record subject to disclosure under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C.A. § 552, As Amended By Public Law No. 104-231, 110 Stat. 3048.

The DRA will have the right to use all ideas, or adaptations of those ideas, contained in any proposal received in response to this RFP. Selection or rejection of the proposal will not affect this right.

4.5 Performance Indicators and Performance-Based Contracting

The duration of the contract will be May 1, 2015 – September 30, 2015 and may be extended at the sole discretion of the DRA.

The contractor must comply with all statutes, regulations, codes, ordinances, and licensure or certification requirements applicable to the contractor or to the contractor's agents and employees, and to the subject matter of the contract. Failure to comply shall be deemed inadequate performance.

Performance evaluations shall be conducted prior to the completion of the contract as necessary to determine if the contractor's performance is adequate. In addition, a performance evaluation shall be conducted as soon as practical after the contract performance is completed. Final payment shall not be made unless and until a performance evaluation evidencing adequate performance is submitted.

Some examples of the contract program deliverables and performance indicators are included in this RFP. Other deliverables and performance indicators may be added during the contract process.

4.6 Terms and Conditions

DRA shall not, under any circumstances, be responsible for any cost, or expenses associated with this proposal including, but not limited to, research, investigation, development, preparation, duplication, production, collation, packaging, delivery, transmittal, or presentation of the proposal or any related information, data documentation and material. All costs and expenses incurred by the respondent in connection with this proposal submittal shall be the sole responsibility of the respondent.

The respondent is prohibited from making multiple proposals.

The DRA may withdraw or cancel this RFP any time prior to the award of a contract. The DRA may amend this RFP by issuing a notice of amendment prior to the opening of proposals. In unusual circumstances, the DRA may postpone a proposal opening in order to give sufficient time to respond to an amendment.

Costs for developing any proposal will be the sole responsibility of the respondent whether or not any award results from this solicitation. The DRA will not provide reimbursement for such costs.

The DRA reserves the right to request necessary amendments, reject any or all proposals received, or cancel this RFP, according to the best interest of the DRA. The DRA also reserves the right to waive minor irregularities in proposals provided such action is in the best interest of the DRA.

Where the DRA may waive minor irregularities, such waiver shall in no way modify the RFP requirements or excuse the respondent from full compliance with the RFP specifications and other contract requirements if the respondent is awarded the contract.

Institutions must warrant that no sums or anything of value has been or will be paid directly or indirectly to any officer or employee of DRA such as wages, compensation, or gifts in exchange for acting as officer, agent, employee, subcontractor, or consultant to the institutions in connection with any work compensated or performed.

DRA cannot and does not make any representations or warranties with regard to the information, data, documentation, and material conveyed in this RFP or otherwise provided by DRA. Institutions shall conduct their own independent investigations and analysis and make their own assessments, judgments, and decisions regarding this opportunity.

Some of the contents of this RFP and the response submitted may be incorporated by reference in any final contract resulting from this RFP.

The contract created as a result of this RFP and the accepted response will be made under, and shall be governed by, and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of Mississippi.